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Message from the President

Georgia Southern University

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Dear Colleagues,

Sept. 1, 2020

As we begin the month of September and our third week of classes, I want to thank each of you for the integral role you have played as we kicked off our fall semester. Collectively, you have worked hundreds of hours to prepare and implement our Return to Campus plan; develop, modify, and deliver more than 5,000 classes; and create a campus environment that honors our commitment to the Georgia Southern University experience.

I also want to thank you for diligently following the Eagles *Do Right* guidelines, including social distancing and wearing face coverings. Your commitment to following these protocols is critical to our ability to continue offering an in-person experience this fall.

The positive case reports show that our measures have been successful in mitigating the spread of the virus to our faculty and staff. Conversely, the numbers of positive cases have -- as expected -- risen among our students.

As an institution of nearly 27,000 students and more than 3,000 employees, positive case reports represent a very small proportion of our overall university population, and positive cases are primarily concentrated within the student population on the Statesboro campus. Operationally, we remain fully functional in all assessed areas of operations and our CARES Center is committed to mitigating the spread amongst our campuses. In conjunction with our efforts, several proactive actions at Georgia Southern and within our community have already taken place.

Georgia Southern's six Greek councils have decided to refrain from hosting social events and moved in-person organizational meetings and events to a virtual format through Oct. 1, 2020, on and off campus. Several local businesses have decided to close for a short time. We have provided additional staff to support University Health Services. We met with local health department officials to help increase testing access for our university community. And, we have doubled down on our efforts to remind one another about the need to remain vigilant if we want to continue the semester as we have started.

We remain in frequent communication with the Georgia Department of Public Health, regional healthcare administrators, local government and community leaders, and the University System of Georgia. University leaders meet multiple times a week to assess operational continuity measures, internal and external public health and safety concerns, operational efficiency, and continuity of curriculum and service delivery to our students.

There are a few other updates I would like to share with you.

Testing Accessibility

Beginning September 2, the DPH COVID test site at the Bulloch County Health Department will begin to offer testing hours reserved specifically for Georgia Southern students, faculty and staff. These testing hours will be available on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., and Saturday, 11 a.m. – 12 p.m. More information on how to register has been shared in this week's "5 Things to Know" email.

Fall 2020 Enrollment

I am excited to share with you that, while final census figures will not be released until October, preliminary enrollment projections for the fall semester indicate that we have enrolled a record-setting freshman class! This, along with an increase in dual-enrolled, graduate and fully online students, have us projecting an overall enrollment growth of approximately 2.5% from last fall.

Inclusive Excellence

The university's new Inclusive Excellence Action Plan will be ready for distribution in the next few weeks. Led by Dr. TaJuan Wilson, our Associate Vice President for Inclusive Excellence and Chief Diversity Officer, this plan not only outlines *what* Georgia Southern will do to create more inclusive and welcoming environment for all, but also *how* we are going to do it and how we will measure success. The completion and now implementation of this plan is yet another milestone we have accomplished since Dr. Damon Williams delivered his report in June 2019 outlining seven recommendations toward Inclusive Excellence at Georgia Southern.

Football

We are looking forward to hosting Campbell for our first home football game on Sept. 12! To align with public health guidance and following NCAA and Sun Belt Conference social distancing standards, attendance within the stadium will be limited to 25 percent capacity. While at a reduced capacity number, all season ticket account holders will have the ability to attend all six home games this season and students' tickets will be available in a lottery format. For more information, visit the Eagles Athletics [website](#).

Friends - we are in this together, and our success relies on one another. The plan we have set forth is working but we must stay vigilant. We must support each other and remind our students to continue to *Do Right*. Thank you for your commitment to our students and to the belief in the transformational power of education.

Sincerely,
Kyle

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Growing ourselves to grow others

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